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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAA-01 SES-02 AID-05 SSM-03
OMB-01 ACDA-12 HA-05 /089 W
----------107208 161436Z /53
O P 161400Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9251
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4741

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI ASEC LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION: AUGUST 16, 1978 - 1600 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 4704 (DTG 150753Z AUG 78)

1. SECURITY SITUATION: THE CITY REMAINS GENERALL CALM. THERE WERE EXCHANGES OF SMALL ARMS FIRE IN THE AYN AR-RUMMANEH AREA DURING THE DAY AND NIGHT 15-16 AUGUST. A LARGE BUT UNLOCATED,
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UNPUBLICISED EXPLOSION WAS HEARD IN WEST BEIRUT AT ABOUT 1630 ON AUGUST 15. NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN RIGHTIST MILITIA LEADERS AND THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE (ADF) CONTINUED AUGUST 15.

2. THE ARMY IN SOUTH LEBANON: NUMEROUS SOURCES REPORTED THE WITHDRAWAL OF SOME, IF NOT MOST, OF THE LEBANESE ARMY FORCE FROM THE KAWKABA AREA. STUDY OF POSSIBLE MOVES TO THE UNIFIL

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OPERATIONS AREA BY ANY OF SEVERAL POSSIBLE ROUTES AND METHODS CONTINUED. PUBLICLY, THE ARMY DENIED THAT IT IS WITHDRAWING FROM KAWKABA.

3. PRIME MINISTER HOSS' RETURN FROM SYRIA: THE PRIME MINISTER RETURNED TO BEIRUT AUGUST 15 FOLLOWING TALKS WITH THE SYRIAN PRESIDENT, PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER. PUBLICLY, BOTH SIDES REPORTED "IDENTITY OF VIEWS ON ALL SUBJECTS." HOSS ALSO SPOKE OF UNSPECIFIED FUTURE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AND MEASURES WHICH WOULD BE TAKEN AS A RESULT OF THE MEETING. OTHER THAN A REPORT IN LEFTIST AS-SAFIR THAT BOTH SIDES HAD AGREED TO EXTEND THE MANDATE OF THE ADF, HOWEVER, THERE WAS NO INDICATION OF PROGRESS OR AGREEMENT ON MATTERS OF SUBSTANCE. SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM IS REPORTED IN THE PRESS TO HAVE DISMISSED CALLS FOR MAKING BEIRUT AN "OPEN CITY" AND TO HAVE CALLED FOR NATIONWIDE DISARMAMENT, BUT KHADDAM SPECIFICALLY EXCLUDED THE PALESTINIANS, WHO HAVE A "SPECIAL STATUS", FROM THE PROPOSED DISARMAMENT. KHADDAM FURTHER CHARACTERIZED NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY LEADER CAMILLE CHAMOUN AS A MAN WHO "IS OLD AND NO LONGER CAPABLE OF CONTROLLING HIS TONGUE." HE THEN WEAKENED THE POSITIONS OF THE RELATIVELY MODERATE AMINE GEMAYEL AND DANY CHAMOUN BY NOTING THAT THERE WERE ELEMENTS IN THE NATIONAL LIBERAL AND PHALANGE PARTIES WHO "WANTED TO MEND THEIR FENCES WITH SYRIA." KHADDAM SAID THAT "SUCH TALK MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY ACTION." KHADDAM SAID THAT SYRIAN POLICY DEMANDS (A) LEBANESE UNITY, (B) NO DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL, AVOIDANCE OF CIVIL STRIFE,
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AND (C) SUPPORT FOR THE LEBANESE STATE. HE SAID THAT "WHOEVER SUPPORTS THIS LINE STANDS WITH US, AND WHOEVER OPPOSES IT STANDS AGAINST LEBANON, THE LEBANESE PEOPLE AND THE ARABS." (COMMENT: IT APPEARS THAT NO PROGRESS WAS MADE DURING HOSS' VISIT. IF KHADDAM'S REMARKS ON DISARMAMENT ARE ACCURATELY REPORTED, THEY ARE UNFORTUNATE. THERE IS NO INDICATION OF SYRIAN INTENTION TO GIVE LEBANESE RIGHTISTS EVEN A FACE-SAVING EXIT FROM THEIR CURRENT CONFRONTATION WITH THE SYRIANS.)

4. THE FAKHANI EXPLOSION: THE DEATH TOLL IN THE FAKHANI BLAST REACHED 148 AS RESCUE WORKERS CONTINUED TO REMOVE BODIES FROM THE BUILDING. NO GROUP HAS CLAIMED CREDIT FOR THE BOMBING AND INDICATIONS ARE MOUNTING THAT THE BLAST WAS AN ACCIDENTAL DETONATION OF EXPLOSIVES/MUNITIONS IMPROPERLY STORED IN THE BUILDING'S BASEMENT.

5. EMBASSY SOURCES HAVE CONFIRMED THE RELEASE OF LEBANESE ARAB ARMY (LAA) FOUNDER AHMAD KHATIB, WHO IS NOW SAID TO BE IN SOUTH LEBANON SEEKING TO REVITALIZE THE LAA.
PARKER

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